

***Remarks***

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1-17 and 23-33 are pending in the application, with claims 1 and 30 being the independent claims. Claims 18-22 were non-elected in response to the restriction requirement and are now sought to be cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. These claims may be pursued in a divisional application. Claims 1 and 30 are sought to be amended. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

***Allowable Subject Matter***

Applicant acknowledges early indication of allowable claims 14-17, 26-29 and 31-33, as set forth on page 6 of the Office Action, with appreciation. Dependent claims 14, 26 and 31 are rewritten in an independent form including all the intervening claims. Accordingly, independent claims 14, 26, and 31 are now in condition of allowance along with claims dependent therefrom. In other words, claims 14-17, 26-28, and 31-33 are allowable. Therefore, allowance of claims 14-17, 26-28, and 31-33 is respectfully requested by the Examiner.

Applicants note the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance presented on page 6 of the Office Action. Applicants reserve the right to demonstrate that the pending

and allowable claims are allowable over the references made of record for further reasons related to any of their recited features. Applicants further contend that reservation of this right does not give rise to any implication regarding whether the Applicants agree with or acquiesce in the reasoning provided by the Examiner in the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance.

***Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102***

Claims 1-3, 5-13, 23 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Aoki *et al.* (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0026355). Applicants respectfully traverse.

Claim 1, as amended, recites in part "wherein only a part of the bottom portion of the reticle is within the purge device." In contrast, reticle R of Aoki is completely enclosed by reticle-gas replacement chamber 55a (*see* FIG. 7 of Aoki). Claim 30 recites similar features. Since Aoki fails to teach or suggest each and every feature of claims 1 and 30, Aoki fails to anticipate claims 1 and 30.

Claims 2-3, 5-13 and 23 depend from claim 1 and are patentable over Aoki for at least the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend and further in view of their respective features. For example, claim 3 recites in part "said base includes at least one holding member ***that holds the reticle-pellicle assembly onto the base***" (*emphasis added*). On page 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner points to paragraph [0154] of Aoki to provide this teaching. However, the cited paragraph of Aoki describes a robotic arm to load and unload reticles to/from reticle-gas replacement chamber 55a. For example, Aoki describes "[a] reticle loading mechanism for loading the reticle E is

provided between the reticle library RL, and the reticle chamber 21 inside the reticle-gas replacement chamber 55a" (*see* lines 1-3 in paragraph [154] of Aoki). This is different from a holding member that holds a reticle-pellicle assembly onto the base as recited in claim 3.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

***Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103***

Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aoki in view of Nakano (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0057425). Applicants respectfully traverse.

As described above, Aoki fails to teach or suggest each and every feature of claim 1. Nakano fails to supply the teaching missing from claim 1 with respect to Aoki. Therefore claim 1 is patentable over Aoki and Nakano, individually or in combination.

Claim 4 depends from claim 1 and is patentable over Aoki and Nakano, individually or in combination for at least the same reasons as claim 1 and further in view of their respective features. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Claims 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aoki in view of Kamono (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0150329).

As described above, Aoki fails to teach or suggest each and every feature of claim 1. Kamono fails to supply the teaching missing from claim 1 with respect to Aoki. Therefore claim 1 is patentable over Aoki and Kamono, individually or in combination.

Claims 24 and 25 depend from claim 1 and are patentable over Aoki and Kamono, individually or in combination for at least the same reasons as claim 1 and further in view of their respective features.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

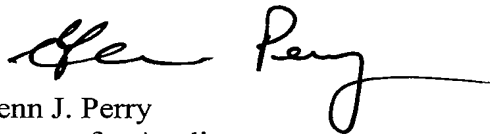
***Conclusion***

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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